

Allied war crimes during World War II

Allied war crimes include both alleged and legally proven violations of the laws of war by the Allies of World War II against either civilians or military personnel of the Axis powers.

At the end of World War II, many trials of Axis war criminals took place, most famously the Nuremberg Trials and Tokyo Trials. However, in Europe, these tribunals were set up under the authority of the London Charter, which only considered allegations of war crimes committed by people who acted in the interests of the Axis powers.

Some war crimes involving Allied personnel were investigated by the Allied powers and led in some instances to courts-martial. Some incidents alleged by historians to have been crimes under the law of war in operation at the time were, for a variety of reasons, not investigated by the Allied powers during the war, or were investigated and a decision was taken not to prosecute.

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Policy

The Western Allies claim that their militaries were directed to observe the Hague Conventions and Geneva Conventions and believed to be conducting a just war fought for defensive reasons. Violations of the conventions did occur, however, including the forcible return of Soviet citizens who had been collaborating with Axis forces to the USSR at the end of the war. The military of the Soviet Union also frequently committed war crimes, which are today known to have been at the direction of its government. These crimes included waging wars of aggression, mass murder and genocide of prisoners of war, and repressing the population of conquered countries.^[1]

Antony Beevor describes the Soviet rape of German women during the occupation of Germany as the "greatest phenomenon of mass rape in history", and has estimated that at least 1.4 million women were raped in East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia alone. He asserts that Soviet women and girls liberated from slave labor in Germany were also violated.^[2]

The German historian and left-wing antiwar activist Jörg Friedrich, argues that Allied aerial bombardment of civilian areas and cultural targets in enemy territory, including the German cities of Cologne, Hamburg, and Dresden, the Abbey in Monte Cassino in Italy during the Battle of Monte Cassino,^[3] the Japanese cities of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, and especially the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which resulted in the total destruction of cities and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, should be considered war crimes ^{[4][5][6]} but no positive or specific customary international humanitarian law with respect to aerial warfare existed prior to and during World War II.^[7] This is also why no Japanese and German officers were prosecuted at the post-World War II Allied war crime trials for the aerial raids on Shanghai, Chongqing, Warsaw, Rotterdam, and British cities during the Blitz.^[8]



The firebombing of Tokyo, codenamed Operation Meetinghouse, killed an estimated 100,000 people, March 1945

Western Allies

Aerial bombing of cities

According to historian Donald Bloxham, "The bombing of Dresden on 13–14 February 1945 was a war crime".^[9] Dr. Gregory Stanton stated: "The Nazi Holocaust was among the most evil genocides in history. But the Allies' firebombing of Dresden and nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were also war crimes."^[10] German author Günter Grass is one of several intellectuals and commentators who have also called the bombing a war crime.^[11]

Canada

C.P. Stacey, the Canadian official campaign historian, reports that on 14 April 1945 rumours spread that the popular commanding officer of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick E. Wigle, had been killed by a civilian sniper. This rumour resulted in the Highlanders setting fire to civilian property in the town of

Friesoythe in an act of reprisal.^[12] Stacey later wrote that the Canadian troops first removed German civilians from their property before setting the houses on fire; he commented that he was "glad to say that [he] never heard of another such case".^[13] It was later found that in fact German soldiers had killed the Argyll's commander.^[14]

United States

- Laconia massacre: US aircraft attacking Germans rescuing the sinking British troopship in the Atlantic Ocean. For example, the pilots of a United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) B-24 Liberator bomber, despite knowing the U-boat's location, intentions, and the presence of British seamen, killed dozens of Laconia's survivors with bombs and strafing attacks, forcing U-156 to cast their remaining survivors into the sea and crash dive to avoid being destroyed.
- Unrestricted marine warfare. Fleet Admiral Nimitz, the wartime commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, provided unapologetic written testimony on Dönitz's behalf at his trial that the U.S. Navy had waged unrestricted submarine warfare in the Pacific from the very first day the U.S. entered the war.
- Canicatti massacre: killing of Italian civilians by Lieutenant Colonel McCaffrey. A confidential inquiry was made, but McCaffrey was never charged with an offense relating to the incident. He died in 1954. This incident remained virtually unknown until Joseph S. Salemi of New York University, whose father witnessed it, publicized it.^{[15][16]}
- In the Biscari massacre, which consists of two instances of mass murders, US troops of the 45th Infantry Division killed roughly 75 prisoners of war, mostly Italian.^{[17][18]}
- Operation Teardrop: Eight of the surviving, captured crewmen from the sunken German submarine U-546 were tortured by US military personnel. Historian Philip K. Lundeborg has written that the beating and torture of U-546's survivors was a singular atrocity motivated by the interrogators' desire to quickly get information on what the U.S. believed were potential cruise missile or ballistic missile attacks on the continental US by German submarines.^{[19][20]}
- The Dachau liberation reprisals: Upon the liberation of Dachau concentration camp, about a dozen guards in the camp were shot by a machine gunner who was guarding them. Other soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, of the US 45th (Thunderbird) Division killed other guards who resisted. In all, about 30 were killed, according to the commanding officer Felix L. Sparks.^{[21][22]} Later, Colonel Howard Buechner wrote that more than 500 were killed.^{[23][24]}
- Near the French village of Audouville-la-Hubert, 30 German Wehrmacht prisoners (probably German Army soldiers) were killed by U.S. paratroopers.^[25]
- In the aftermath of the Malmedy massacre, a written order from the HQ of the 328th US Army Infantry Regiment, dated 21 December 1944, stated: No SS troops or paratroopers will be taken prisoner but will be shot on sight.^[26] Major-General Raymond Hufft (US Army) gave instructions to his troops not to take prisoners when they crossed the Rhine in 1945. "After the war, when he reflected on the war crimes he authorized, he admitted, 'if the Germans had won, I would have been on trial at Nuremberg instead of them.'"^[27] Stephen Ambrose related: "I've interviewed well over 1000 combat veterans. Only one of them said he shot a prisoner ... Perhaps as many as one-third of the veterans ... however, related incidents in which they saw other GIs shooting unarmed German prisoners who had their hands up."^[28]
- Secret wartime files made public only in 2006 reveal that American GIs committed 400 sexual offenses in Europe, including 126 rapes in England, between 1942 and 1945.^[29] A study by Robert J. Lilly estimates that a total of 14,000 civilian women in England, France and Germany were raped by American GIs during World War II.^{[30][31]} It is estimated that there were around 3,500 rapes by American servicemen in France between June 1944 and the end of the war and one historian has claimed that sexual violence against women in liberated France was common.^[32]



Photo showing execution of Waffen-SS troops in a coal yard in the area of the Dachau concentration camp during its liberation. April 29, 1945 (US Army photograph)^[Note 1]

France

Maquis

Following the Operation Dragoon landings in southern France and the collapse of the German military occupation in August 1944, large numbers of Germans could not escape from France and surrendered to the French Forces of the Interior. The Resistance executed a few of the Wehrmacht and most of the Gestapo or SS prisoners.^[33]

The Maquis also executed 17 German prisoners of war at Saint-Julien-de-Crempse (in the Dordogne region), on 10 September 1944, 14 of whom have since been positively identified. The murders were revenge killings for German murders of 17 local inhabitants of the village of St. Julien on 3 August 1944, which were themselves reprisal killings in response to Resistance activity in the St. Julien region, which was home to an active Maquis cell.^[34]



A pile of bodies before cremation after the British-American bombing raid on Dresden, 1945

Moroccan Goumiers

French Moroccan troops of the French Expeditionary Corps, known as Goumiers, committed mass crimes in Italy during and after the Battle of Monte Cassino^[35] and in Germany.^[36] According to Italian sources, more than 12,000 civilians, above all young and old women, children, were kidnapped, raped, or killed by Goumiers.^[37] This is featured in the Italian film *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*) with Sophia Loren.

Anthony Clayton in his book 'France, Soldiers, and Africa' (Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988) devotes several pages to the criminal activities of the Goumiers, which he partially ascribes to the record of what was considered normal practices in their homeland.

United Kingdom

On 4 May 1940, in response to Germany's intensive unrestricted submarine warfare, during the Battle of the Atlantic and its invasion of Denmark and Norway, the Royal Navy conducted its own unrestricted submarine campaign. The Admiralty announced that all vessels in the Skagerrak, were to be sunk on sight without warning. This was contrary to the terms of the Second London Naval Treaty.^{[38][39]}

In July 1941, the submarine HMS Torbay (under the command of Anthony Miers) was based in the Mediterranean where it sank several German ships. On two occasions, once off the coast of Alexandria, Egypt, and the other off the coast of Crete, the crew attacked and killed dozens of shipwrecked German sailors and troops. None of the shipwrecked survivors posed a major threat to *Torbay's* crew. Miers made no attempt to hide his actions, and reported them in his official logs. He received a strongly worded reprimand from his superiors following the first incident. Mier's actions violated the Hague Convention of 1907, which banned the killing of shipwreck survivors under any circumstances.^{[40][41]}

During Operation Overlord, British line of communication troops conducted small-scale looting in Bayeux and Caen in France, following their liberation, in violation of the Hague Conventions.^[42] Looting, rape, and prisoner execution was committed by British soldiers in a smaller scale than other armies throughout the war.^[43] On 23 May 1945, British troops in Schleswig-Holstein were alleged to have plundered Glücksburg castle, stealing jewelry, and desecrating 38 coffins from the castle's mausoleum.^[44]

The "London Cage", a MI19 prisoner of war facility in the UK during and immediately after the war, was subject to allegations of torture.^[45] The Bad Nenndorf interrogation centre in occupied Germany, managed by the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, was the subject of an official inquiry in 1947, which found that there was "mental and

physical torture during the interrogations" and that "personal property of the prisoners were stolen".^[46]

The Italian statistics record eight rapes and nineteen attempted rape by British soldiers in Italy between September 1943 and December 1945. Various sources, including the Special Investigation Branch as well as evidences from Belgian reporters, said that rape and sexual harassment by British troops occurred frequently following the invasion of Sicily in 1943.^[47] In Germany, rapes of local women were committed by British and Canadian troops. Even elderly women were targeted. Though the Royal Military Police tended to turn a blind eye towards abuse of German prisoners and civilians, rape was a major issue for them. Some officers, however, treated the behaviour of their men with leniency. Many rapes were committed under the effects of alcohol or post-traumatic stress, but there were cases of premeditated attacks, like the assault on three German women in the town of Neustadt am Rübenberge or the attempted gang-rape of two local girls at gunpoint in the village of Oyle, near Nienburg, which ended in the death of one of the women when, whether intentionally or not, one of the soldiers discharged his gun, hitting her in the neck.^[48] There were also reports of "sexual assault and indecency" committed by British soldiers against children in Belgium and the Netherlands, when a number of men were convicted of these crimes while fraternizing with Dutch and Belgian families during the winter of 1944–1945.^[48]

Eastern Allies

Yugoslavia

Armed conflict		Perpetrator	
World War II in Yugoslavia		Yugoslav Partisans	
Incident	Type of crime	Persons responsible	Notes
<u>Bleiburg tragedy</u>	War crimes, crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	The victims were Yugoslav collaborationist troops (ethnic Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes). They were executed without trial in an act of vengeance for the genocide committed by the pro-Axis collaborationist states (in particular the <u>Ustaše</u>) installed by the Nazis during the German occupation of Yugoslavia. ^[49]
<u>Foibe massacres</u>	War crimes, crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Following Italy's 1943 armistice with the Allied powers, and again after the end of the German occupation of <u>Istria</u> in 1945, Yugoslav resistance forces executed an unknown number (ranging from several hundreds to some thousands) of ethnic Italians accused of collaboration, regardless of their personal responsibility. ^{[50][51]}
<u>Vojvodina massacre</u>	War crimes, crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	1944–1945 killings of ethnic Germans and Hungarians in Bačka, and Serb <u>prisoners of war</u> . ^[52]
<u>Kočevski Rog massacre</u>	War crimes, crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Massacres of prisoners of war, and their families. ^[53]
<u>Macelj massacre</u>	Crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Massacres of prisoners of war, and their families. ^[54]
<u>Tezno trench</u>	Crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Massacres of prisoners of war, and their families. ^[55]
<u>Barbara Pit</u>	Crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Massacres of prisoners of war, and their families. ^[56]
<u>Prevalje mass grave</u>	Crimes against humanity: murder of prisoners of war and civilians.	No prosecutions.	Massacres of prisoners of war, and their families. ^[57]

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union had not signed the Geneva Convention of 1929 that protected, and stated how prisoners of war should be treated. This cast doubt on whether the Soviet treatment of Axis prisoners was therefore a war crime, although prisoners "were [not] treated even remotely in accordance with the Geneva Convention",^[58] resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands.^[59] However, the Nuremberg Tribunal rejected this as a general argument. The tribunal held that the Hague Conventions (which the 1929 Geneva Convention did not replace but only augmented, and unlike the 1929 convention, were ones that the Russian Empire had ratified) and other customary laws of war, regarding the treatment of prisoners of war, were binding on all nations in a conflict whether they were signatories to the specific treaty or not.^{[60][61][62]}

Acts of mass rape and other war crimes were committed by Soviet troops during the occupation of East Prussia (Danzig),^{[63][64][65][66]} parts of Pomerania and Silesia, during the Battle of Berlin,^[67] and during the Battle of Budapest.

Late in the war, Yugoslavia's communist partisans complained about the rapes and looting committed by the Soviet Army while traversing their country. Milovan Djilas later recalled Joseph Stalin's response,

"Does Djilas, who is himself a writer, not know what human suffering and the human heart are? Can't he understand it if a soldier who has crossed thousands of kilometers through blood and fire and death has fun with a woman or takes some trifle?"^[68]

Soviet war correspondent Natalya Gesse observed the Red Army in 1945: "The Russian soldiers were raping every German female from eight to eighty. It was an army of rapists". Polish women as well as Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian slave laborers were also mass raped by the Red Army. The Soviet war correspondent Vasily Grossman described: "Liberated Soviet girls quite often complain that our soldiers rape them".^[69]

The Gegenmiao massacre of 1945; rapes and massacres conducted by the Soviet Army over half a group of 1,800 Japanese women and children who had taken refuge in the lamasery Gegenmiao/Koken-miao (葛根廟) during the Soviet invasion of Manchuria.^[70]

Asia and the Pacific War

Allied soldiers in Pacific and Asian theatres sometimes killed Japanese soldiers who were attempting to surrender or after they had surrendered. A social historian of the Pacific War, John W. Dower, states that "by the final years of the war against Japan, a truly vicious cycle had developed in which the Japanese reluctance to surrender had meshed horribly with Allied disinterest in taking prisoners".^[71] Dower suggests that most Japanese personnel were told that they would be "killed or tortured" if they fell into Allied hands and, as a consequence, most of those faced with defeat on the battlefield fought to the death or committed suicide.^[72] In addition, it was held to be shamefully disgraceful for a Japanese soldier to surrender, leading many to commit suicide or to fight to the death regardless of any beliefs concerning their possible treatment as POWs. In fact, the Japanese Field Service Code said that surrender was not permissible.^[73]

And while it was "not official policy" for Allied personnel to take no prisoners, "over wide reaches of the Asian battleground it was everyday practice".^[74]

On 4 March 1943, during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, General George Kenney ordered Allied patrol boats and aircraft to attack Japanese rescue vessels, as well as the survivors from the sunken vessels on life rafts and swimming or floating in the sea. This was later justified on the grounds that rescued servicemen would have been rapidly landed at their military destination and promptly returned to active service.^[75] These orders violated the Hague Convention of 1907, which banned the killing of shipwreck survivors under any circumstances.^[76]

United Kingdom

During the Burma Campaign, there are recorded instances of British troops removing gold teeth from dead Japanese troops and displaying Japanese skulls as trophies.^[77]

During the Allied occupation of Japan, Australian, British, Indian and New Zealand troops in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) committed 62 recorded rapes. The commander of the BCOF's official reports state that members of the BCOF were convicted of committing 57 rapes in the period May 1946 to December 1947 and a further 23 between January 1948 and September 1951. No official statistics on the incidence of serious crimes during the

BCOF's first three months in Japan (February to April 1946) are available.^[78] Australian historian Robin Gerster contends that while the official statistics underestimate the level of serious crime among BCOF members, Japanese police often did not pass reports they received on to the BCOF and that the serious crimes which were reported were properly investigated by BCOF military police. The penalties given to members of the BCOF convicted of serious crimes were "not severe", however, and those imposed on Australians were often mitigated or quashed by Australian courts.^[79]

China

C. P. Fitzgerald describes China under the rule of the *Guo Mindang* (or *Kuomintang*; KMT) as: "the Chinese people groaned under a regime fascist in every quality except efficiency."^[80]

There has been relatively little research into the general treatment of Japanese prisoners taken by Chinese Nationalist forces, such as the National Revolutionary Army (NRA), during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45), according to R. J. Rummel.^[81] However, civilians and conscripts, as well as Japanese civilians in China, were frequently maltreated by the Chinese military. Rummel says that Chinese peasants "often had no less to fear from their own soldiers than ... from the Japanese".^[82] The Nationalist military was reinforced by recruits gained through violent campaigns of conscription directed at Chinese civilians. According to Rummel:

This was a deadly affair in which men were kidnapped for the army, rounded up indiscriminately by press-gangs or army units among those on the roads or in the towns and villages, or otherwise gathered together. Many men, some the very young and old, were killed resisting or trying to escape. Once collected, they would be roped or chained together and marched, with little food or water, long distances to camp. They often died or were killed along the way, sometimes less than 50 percent reaching camp alive. Then recruit camp was no better, with hospitals resembling Nazi concentration camps... Probably 3,081,000 died during the Sino-Japanese War; likely another 1,131,000 during the Civil War—4,212,000 dead in total. *Just during conscription* [emphasis added].^[83]

Within some intakes of Nationalist conscripts, there was a death rate of 90% from disease, starvation or violence before they commenced training.^[84]

Examples of war crimes committed by Chinese associated forces include:

- in 1937 near Shanghai, the killing, torture and assault of Japanese POWs and Chinese civilians accused of collaboration, were recorded in photographs taken by Swiss businessman Tom Simmen.^[85] In 1996, Simmen's son released the pictures, showing Nationalist Chinese soldiers committing summary executions by decapitation and shooting, as well as public torture.
- the Tungchow Mutiny of August 1937; Chinese soldiers recruited by Japan mutinied and switched sides in Tōngzhōu, Beijing, before attacking Japanese civilians, killing 280 and raping many women.^{[81][86]}
- Nationalist troops in Hubei Province, during May 1943, ordered whole towns to evacuate and then "plundered" them; any civilians who refused or were unable to leave, were killed.^[82]

Australia

According to historian Mark Johnston, "the killing of unarmed Japanese was common" and Australian command tried to put pressure on troops to actually take prisoners, but the troops proved reluctant.^[87] When prisoners were indeed taken "it often proved difficult to prevent them from killing captured Japanese before they could be interrogated".^[88] According to Johnston, as a consequence of this type of behavior, "Some Japanese soldiers were almost certainly deterred from surrendering to Australians".^[88]

Major General Paul Cullen indicated that the killing of Japanese prisoners in the Kokoda Track Campaign was not uncommon. In one instance he recalled during the battle at Gorari that "the leading platoon captured five or seven Japanese and moved on to the next battle. The next platoon came along and bayoneted these Japanese."^[89] He also stated that he found the killings understandable but that it had left him feeling guilty.

United States

American soldiers in the Pacific often deliberately killed Japanese soldiers who had surrendered. According to Richard Aldrich, who has published a study of the diaries kept by United States and Australian soldiers, they sometimes massacred prisoners of war.^[90] Dower states that in "many instances ... Japanese who did become prisoners were killed on the spot or en route to prison compounds".^[74] According to Aldrich it was common practice for U.S. troops not to take prisoners.^[91] This analysis is supported by British historian Niall Ferguson,^[92] who also says that, in 1943, "a secret [U.S.] intelligence report noted that only the promise of ice cream and three days leave would ... induce American troops not to kill surrendering Japanese".^[92]

Ferguson states such practices played a role in the ratio of Japanese prisoners to dead being 1:100 in late 1944. That same year, efforts were taken by Allied high commanders to suppress "take no prisoners" attitudes,^[92] among their own personnel (as these were affecting intelligence gathering) and to encourage Japanese soldiers to surrender. Ferguson adds that measures by Allied commanders to improve the ratio of Japanese prisoners to Japanese dead, resulted in it reaching 1:7, by mid-1945. Nevertheless, taking no prisoners was still standard practice among US troops at the Battle of Okinawa, in April–June 1945.^[92]

Ulrich Straus, a US Japanologist, suggests that frontline troops intensely hated Japanese military personnel and were "not easily persuaded" to take or protect prisoners, as they believed that Allied personnel who surrendered, got "no mercy" from the Japanese.^[93] Allied soldiers believed that Japanese soldiers were inclined to feign surrender in order to make surprise attacks.^[93] Therefore, according to Straus, "Senior officers opposed the taking of prisoners on the grounds that it needlessly exposed American troops to risks".^[93] When prisoners nevertheless were taken at Guadalcanal, interrogator Army Captain Burden noted that many times these were shot during transport because "it was too much bother to take him in".^[94]

Ferguson suggests that "it was not only the fear of disciplinary action or of dishonor that deterred German and Japanese soldiers from surrendering. More important for most soldiers was the perception that prisoners would be killed by the enemy anyway, and so one might as well fight on".^[92]

US historian James J. Weingartner attributes the very low number of Japanese in US POW compounds to two important factors, a Japanese reluctance to surrender and a widespread American "conviction that the Japanese were "animals" or "subhuman" and unworthy of the normal treatment accorded to POWs."^[95] The latter reason is supported by Ferguson, who says that "Allied troops often saw the Japanese in the same way that Germans regarded Russians—as Untermenschen".^[92]

Mutilation of Japanese war dead

Some Allied soldiers collected Japanese body parts. The incidence of this by American personnel occurred on "a scale large enough to concern the Allied military authorities throughout the conflict and was widely reported and commented on in the American and Japanese wartime press".^[96]

The collection of Japanese body parts began quite early in the war, prompting a September 1942 order for disciplinary action against such souvenir taking.^[96] Harrison concludes that, since this was the first real opportunity to take such items (the Battle of Guadalcanal), "[c]learly, the collection of body parts on a scale large enough to concern the military

authorities had started as soon as the first living or dead Japanese bodies were encountered".^[96]

When Japanese remains were repatriated from the Mariana Islands after the war, roughly 60 percent were missing their skulls.^[96]

In a 13 June 1944 memorandum, the US Army Judge Advocate General, (JAG) Major General Myron C. Cramer, asserted that "such atrocious and brutal policies", were both "repugnant to the sensibilities of all civilized people"^[95] and also violations of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field, which stated that: "After each engagement, the occupant of the field of battle shall take measures to search for the wounded and dead, and to protect them against pillage and maltreatment."^[97]

Cramer recommended the distribution to all commanders of a directive ordering them to prohibit the misuse of enemy body parts.^[95]

These practices were in addition also in violation of the unwritten customary rules of land warfare and could lead to the death penalty.^[95] The US Navy JAG mirrored that opinion one week later, and also added that "the atrocious conduct of which some US personnel were guilty could lead to retaliation by the Japanese which would be justified under international law".^[95]

Rape

US soldiers raped Okinawan women during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.^[98]

Okinawan historian and former director of the Okinawa Prefectural Historical Archives Oshiro Masayasu writes based on several years of research:

Soon after the US Marines landed, all the women of a village on Motobu Peninsula fell into the hands of US soldiers. At the time, there were only women, children and old people in the village, as all the young men had been mobilized for the war. Soon after landing, the Marines "mopped up" the entire village, but found no signs of Japanese forces. Taking advantage of the situation, they started "hunting for women" in broad daylight and those who were hiding in the village or nearby air raid shelters were dragged out one after another.^[99]

There were also 1,336 reported rapes during the first 10 days of the occupation of Kanagawa prefecture after the Japanese surrender.^[98]

According to interviews carried out by the New York Times and published by them in 2000, multiple elderly people from an Okinawan village confessed that after the United States had won the Battle of Okinawa three armed marines kept coming to the village every week to force the villagers to gather all the local women, who were then carried off into the hills and raped. The article goes deeper into the matter and claims that the villagers' tale - true or not - is part of a 'dark, long-kept secret' the unraveling of which 'refocused attention on what historians say is one of the most widely ignored crimes of the war': "the widespread rape of Okinawan women by American servicemen".^[100] Although Japanese reports of rape were largely ignored at the time, academic estimates have been that as many as 10,000 Okinawan women may have been raped. It has been claimed that the rape was so prevalent that most Okinawans over age 65 around the year 2000 either knew or had heard of a woman who was raped in the aftermath of the war. Military officials denied the mass rapings, and all surviving veterans refused the New York Times' request for an interview.^[101]



U.S. Navy Lieutenant (j.g.) E.V. McPherson with a Japanese skull on board USS PT-341

Professor of East Asian Studies and expert on Okinawa Steve Rabson said: "I have read many accounts of such rapes in Okinawan newspapers and books, but few people know about them or are willing to talk about them". Books, diaries, articles and other documents refer to rapes by American soldiers of various races and backgrounds. Samuel Saxton, a retired captain, explained that the American veterans and witnesses may have believed: "It would be unfair for the public to get the impression that we were all a bunch of rapists after we worked so hard to serve our country". Masaie Ishihara, a sociology professor, supports this: "There is a lot of historical amnesia out there, many people don't want to acknowledge what really happened".^[101]

An explanation given for why the US military has no record of any rapes is that few - if any - Okinawan women reported abuse, mostly out of fear and embarrassment. Those who did report them are believed by historians to have been ignored by the US military police. A large scale effort to determine the extent of such crimes has also never been called for. Over five decades after the war has ended the women who were believed to have been raped still refused to give a public statement, with friends, local historians and university professors who had spoken with the women instead saying they preferred not to discuss it publicly. According to a Nago, Okinawan police spokesman: "Victimized women feel too ashamed to make it public".^[101]

In his book "Tennozan: The Battle of Okinawa and the Atomic Bomb", George Feifer noted that by 1946 there had been fewer than 10 reported cases of rape in Okinawa. He explains that it was: "partly because of shame and disgrace, partly because Americans were victors and occupiers". Feifer claimed: "In all there were probably thousands of incidents, but the victims' silence kept rape another dirty secret of the campaign."^[102] Many people wondered why it never came to light after the inevitable American-Japanese babies the many women must have had. In interviews, historians and Okinawan elders said that some Okinawan women who were raped did give birth to biracial children, but that many of them were immediately killed or left behind out of shame, disgust or fearful trauma. More often, however, rape victims underwent crude abortions with the help of village midwives.^[101]

However, American professor of Japanese Studies Michael S. Molasky argues that Okinawan civilians "were often surprised at the comparatively humane treatment they received from the American enemy."^{[103][104]} According to *Islands of Discontent: Okinawan Responses to Japanese and American Power* by the American Mark Selden, the Americans "did not pursue a policy of torture, rape, and murder of civilians as Japanese military officials had warned."^[105]

Comparative death rates of POWs

According to James D. Morrow, "Death rates of POWs held is one measure of adherence to the standards of the treaties because substandard treatment leads to death of prisoners". The "democratic states generally provide good treatment of POWs".^[106]

Held by Axis powers












- US and British Commonwealth POWs held by Germany: ~4%^[106]
- Soviet POWs held by Germany: 57.5%^[92]
- Italian POWs and military internees held by Germany: between 6% and 8.4%^[107]
- Western Allied POWs held by Japan: 27%^[108] (Figures for Japan may be misleading though, as sources indicate that either 10,800^[109] or 19,000^[110] of 35,756 fatalities among Allied POW's were from "friendly fire" at sea when their transport ships were sunk. Nonetheless, the Geneva convention required the labelling of such craft as POW ships, which the Japanese neglected to do.)

Held by the Allies

- German POWs in East European (not including the Soviet Union) hands 32.9%^[92]
- German soldiers held by Soviet Union: 15–33% (14.7% in *The Dictators* by Richard Overy, 35.8% in Ferguson)^[92]
- Italian soldiers held by the Soviet Union: 79%^[111]
- Japanese POWs held by Soviet Union: 10%
- German POWs in British hands 0.03%^[92]
- German POWs in American hands 0.15%^[92]
- German POWs in French hands 2.58%^[92]
- Japanese POWs held by U.S.: relatively low, mainly suicides according to James D. Morrow.^[112]
- Japanese POWs in Chinese hands: 24%

Novelist James Bacque claims an analysis of records supports a German POW death rate of over 25%,^[113] although his figures have been disputed by academics, who describe Bacque's figures as "simply impossible".^[114] A panel of historians concluded that Bacque is a Canadian novelist with no previous historical research or writing experience,^[115] and his writing is "seriously — nay, spectacularly — flawed in its most fundamental aspects."^[116]

Summary table

		Origin					
		 <u>Soviet Union</u>	 <u>United States and United Kingdom</u>	 <u>China</u>	<u>Western Allies</u>	 <u>Germany</u>	 <u>Japan</u>
Held by	 <u>Soviet Union</u>	—	—	—	—	14.70–35.80%	10.00%
	 <u>United Kingdom</u>	—	—	—	—	0.03%	
	 <u>United States</u>	—	—	—	—	0.15%	varying
	 <u>France</u>	—	—	—	—	2.58%	
	<u>East European</u>	—	—	—	—	32.90%	
	 <u>Germany</u>	57.50%	4.00%			—	—
	 <u>Japan</u>		included in <u>Western Allies</u> (27%)	not documented	27.00%	—	—

Portrayal

Holocaust denial literature

The focus on supposed Allied atrocities during the war has been a theme in Holocaust denial literature, particularly in countries where outright denial of the Holocaust is illegal.^[117] According to historian Deborah Lipstadt, the concept of "comparable Allied wrongs", such as the post-war expulsions and Allied war crimes, is at the center of, and a continuously repeated theme of, contemporary Holocaust denial; phenomenon she calls "immoral equivalencies".^[118]

Japanese neo-nationalists

Japanese neo-nationalists argue that Allied war crimes and the shortcomings of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal were equivalent to the war crimes committed by Japanese forces during the war. American historian John W. Dower has written that this position is "a kind of historiographic *cancellation* of immorality—as if the transgressions of others exonerate one's own crimes".^[119] While right-wing forces in Japan have tried to push for their perspective on war-time history, they have been unsuccessful due to opposition from both within and outside Japan.^[120]

See also

- Bleiburg massacre
- Communist purges in Serbia in 1944–1945
- Foibe massacres
- List of massacres
- Victor's justice
- Forced labor of Germans in the Soviet Union
- Forced labour of Germans after World War II
- Soviet partisans, atrocities against civilians in Finland
- *Taken by Force* (book)
- Churchill's advocacy of chemical strike against German cities

Notes

1. The caption for the photograph in the US National Archives reads, "SC208765, Soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Division, US Seventh Army, order SS men to come forward when one of their number tried to escape from the Dachau, Germany, concentration camp after it was captured by US forces. Men on the ground in background feign death by falling as the guards fired a volley at the fleeing SS men. (157th Regt. 4/29/45)." (Moody 2003) Lt. Colonel Felix L. Sparks disputed this and thought that it "represented the initial step in the cover-up of the execution of German guards". (Moody 2003)
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